



positive

emotions. These promote and support harmony and peace in living together with others.

Something else to observe is that we should never talk during a situation of conflict. It cannot help at all, because when we are emotional we do not listen to other people. In our emotions we want to be right. What we can do is ask ourselves: "Is it our prestige that is involved in this situation, so that we are too interested in ourselves again?".

And we should diminish our feeling of helplessness, the feeling that I cannot do anything about it, the feeling that I am now forced to be in this situation.

This gives us all the most quick anger. Look at mothers, how often they feel helpless, and get angry with the child. Then very often a mother asks her child: "Why did you do this?" and the child answers truthfully "I don't know". This answer makes mother still more angry. So we should avoid such a silly question.

### Mutual Respect

The second factor is mutual respect. It does not matter who our partner is in a given conflict, be it a very young child or a grandfather or whoever - the only important thing is the knowledge that we should be equals. Equality between the sexes, between the generations, between everybody is absolutely essential. And what should we do then? We try to understand the other person, because the other person, no matter who it is, is also suffering. We should never think we are the only person who is suffering or that we are carrying all the suffering of the world. So never try, especially in a conflict, wanting to be right. This will always be the beginning of a fight, of a struggle, because we all have this feeling that we should be right. If we are not right we are inferior. Forget this wanting to be right; it will never help.

And never look for who is guilty or find fault with the other person. Every idea of who is guilty means looking back to the past. It is of no interest. We are now living in the present. Even a second ago is already the past; it has happened. We

cannot change the past. The past has only two tasks for us: 1) to learn from the past, and  
2) when we have learned, then to forget the past. In this moment we can change our ideas,  
our imagination. We can look with different eyes at what is happening now. So forget who  
is guilty. We should never, as we know from `Abdu'l-Bahá, look at the negative side of the other person.

In a conflict we should never find fault with others by telling them what they should do or not, because it is damaging the relationship. We should only ask  
ourselves: "What can I do? What can I change in myself, in my own behaviour?"

Another very helpful attitude is to separate the doer from his deed. For example, if my son has even damaged half of my house, I should still love him, being  
my son, whatever he does or says. What he has done I cannot like but I can still love the  
person. Separating the person from his behaviour will be very helpful in avoiding anger  
and becoming more objective and not a slave of our emotions.

An additional method is "neither fight nor give in" but "understand and help". To fight I am hurting the dignity of another person, but to give in I hurt my own dignity. This is the real and realistic attitude. These are no  
recipes I am giving to you. These are just recommendations. You can be sure that they  
help.

### Understanding the Motives

The third factor is not easy, but we should understand the motives that led to this problem, this conflict. We should look for the motivation, and that means  
for the goals, for the purpose, for the meaning we have for every kind of our behaviour.

There is something very interesting in looking forward to the motives and goals. By  
looking back we cannot change the reasons or the past, but we can change our goals, even  
if these goals are unconscious, because they are ahead of us, and this we can change.

There is a wonderful method in living together and especially in finding solutions for our troubles, conflicts and problems. And it is very interesting  
that there are only four immediate goals of the wrong behaviour of little

children. The first goal every small child has, is that it wants attention. To want love is alright for everybody, but when a child goes to school then it should no longer ask for undue and exaggerated attention. When we understand that a child is following this goal, then we know what to do: First, we should ignore the bad behaviour of the child in a given situation, if possible. Second, we give the child more attention, not when the child asks for it by incorrect behaviour, but only in moments when we are together in love and harmony. Then we know this child needs more of my attention in a positive way.

The 2nd goal: If a child is not successful in getting enough attention with his good or bad behaviour, then it follows the goal of wanting to feel superior or at least not inferior. It wants to feel that it is stronger than its mother or whoever is educating the child. For example, a noisy child is told: "Don't be so loud!" For a moment the child is quiet. But then it goes on with the noise, because when I ask the child "Don't be so loud!" I am giving attention for only a short moment, but the child wants to get more attention than this. It even may increase the noise, which means that it wants to fight with me. It is no longer satisfied with getting attention, but it wants to at least feel superior to, or stronger than the other person. Again, we should not talk at this moment. Small children we can distract easily.

But when they are older and we are not going to fight, so we leave the room very friendly - not annoyed. Because when we leave the room and slam the door, then we are again giving the child a feeling of some kind of triumph, which, of course, does not help.

The third goal: If they have no success at feeling superior, children really know how to hurt their educators. They know us better than vice versa, because we very often underestimate the intelligence of our children, and so in this moment the child is not interested in anything but to hurt, to revenge himself. It believes we do not love it. Children who often follow this third goal of revenge, are the most difficult children to educate. From these children come the biggest percentage of juvenile

delinquents and young criminals. I very much hope you will not experience this.

The fourth goal of children: They retreat. They want to be left alone. They are most discouraged at these times. But we can help them better than the children who actively want to avenge themselves. There is only one thing which can help: to build upon the positive side of such a child. These children are so discouraged that they do not believe they have a positive side. But when we really want to we can always find something positive and we can build it up. We can never build upon negative things.

It is not easy to admit to ourselves that we are following these goals, because they are all negative, and everybody wants to have a good opinion of himself. When we recognise which goal we are following in a given moment, then we shall know what we can do. Also we should look at these inadequacies as something wonderful, because they are an opportunity to improvement. And when we improve our behaviour or our attitude, then we can encourage ourselves.

#### Changing the Present Agreement

The fourth factor in solving our conflicts is that we should change the present agreement. When two people fight they are in perfect, but unconscious, agreement. Both want to be right, both want to fight. What you can do is change this agreement by conscious communication. My partner of course has a problem and I also have a problem. But we not only have a self responsibility but also a co-responsibility for other people and especially for other members in our family.

#### Mutual Cooperation

The fifth factor is mutual cooperation, which means shared responsibility. The biggest enemy of cooperation is fear and anxiety, and everybody has, more or less, some sort of it. So I can become aware that I should not feel responsible alone for what is happening. The other person can also help. And knowing more about these things I can probably do more than I did in the past. At least I ask myself again: "What can I do?"

We decide unconsciously to see things negatively or positively. I can always make out of negative things something more positive. This is a very important training. We need to believe in perfection, but we can also be clear that we have the right to make mistakes and to have the courage to be imperfect. We do need the faith in perfection and the courage to be imperfect.

It is most essential that we learn to talk with each other and not only to each other. This we can also learn from the Bahá'í religion. When we have learnt to talk with each other, we can then learn to consult together.

When we decide to really talk with each other, we have to consider four most helpful factors: The first is: We should never demand anything from our partner, but approach him in a humble way, asking "Look, I have a problem and I cannot get rid of this problem alone. I don't know what to do. I need your advice. When do you have time?". That is the first step.

The next is: That we cannot solve a problem or a conflict just in a short way while we are moving or doing something else. We must find a place and time where we can talk without being disturbed by children, the telephone, visitors or whatever. Find a quiet place or go for a walk together. So it is not only the time but also the place we should be clear on.

The third factor is that I should never approach my partner with his problem. I can approach him only with my problem. Because if I approach him with his problem, he will feel attacked by me and so he will not be willing to talk, but only to defend himself. When I say: "I get angry when you say or do that...", it is finished! No further talk is possible because that was an attack. That means "you are guilty". We should be very honest and say: "Look, here I am with all my faults and I need your help" and so on. So the third factor is: Approach your partner only with your own problem.

The fourth and last factor for genuine talk with each other is this: In advance we agree that if we are talking together and one of the partners gets angry, the one who is less angry tells his partner: "I think we should postpone our

consultation." Postpone it, because there are emotions involved and a real talk with each other is, in such a moment, impossible.

For real consultation our motives should be pure. That means we should forget our ego as much as possible.

To conclude, When we succeed in solving our conflicts in such a positive way, then this is a really important factor for self-encouragement. For example:

We should be aware that everybody is potentially perfect, because we are the creatures of

God. In the words of Bahá'u'lláh: "Regard man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value", and this is encouraging.

To always have a positive outlook is also encouraging, but it needs quite some training and cannot be done all at once.

To diminish our fear seems to be very important. A good method of doing something, when we doubt whether we can succeed, is to ask ourselves: "What is the worst thing which can happen to me?" Usually the worst does not happen, but to know what to do if it does, makes me feel confident, especially when I am convinced that I shall give my best.

We can learn to become more conscious of our prejudices. We can understand the past and then forget it. We know that the Bahá'í religion is an encouraging religion and there is no need to change it into a discouraging religion. It is up to us to decide.

Finally, when we solve our conflicts, we not only encourage others but also ourselves.

There is no bigger self-encouragement than to encourage others, to help them and contribute to them.

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